

July Comes To Hope

BETTY BLADES

There aren't many towns smaller than Hope. It's just about as small as a town can be and still be called a town, but it is typically Hoosier from the top of the shiny silver water tower to the green tufts shooting through the cracks in the sidewalks around the Square. It lies in an area of large, prosperous farms just south of the point where a small meandering creek called Haw-creek crosses State Road 9. The town is surrounded by rich pastures and tall, golden corn fields, with an occasional wood lot dotting the landscape.

Summer brings little change in the population. There are no vacation motor trips or summers on the lakes. Here, most of the townspeople must take care of their small business establishments, and the greater number who live on farms must spend every minute cultivating the crops and attending to the other numerous chores of the farmer.

July reveals this town at its lowest ebb. At times the almost unbearable heat just about smothers all activity. It weighs like a woolen blanket over the town.

But Hoosiers are used to weather extremes. With the first streaks of dawn in the eastern sky, the town becomes a beehive of activity. Trucks bringing meat from the city are unloaded amid the smell of raw beef and perspiring bodies. The peep-peeps of day old chicks announce the opening of the feed store and hatchery. Snowy white washings dazzle from the clothes lines. Birds accompany this labor, weaving it together into a symphony of activity.

As the sun climbs higher in its path across the pale, whitish sky, the air is filled with the excited voices of laughing chil-

dren and the sharp staccato of barking dogs. The rectangular gardens, under the able eyes of the older children, are hoed and weeded. Sweat pours from their muscular bodies as they work, but they scarcely notice the heat. They are raising the family's food for the winter. They love to strip the water grass and dandelions from around the plants and to leave them standing alone, unadorned by weeds. They love the clean smell of the brown earth freshly turned.

Finding an umbrella to shade us from the beating sun, we head toward the Square, the center of town. Here on Saturday night the 4-H band gives a brassy concert, while all the townspeople and neighboring farmers, eating ice cream cones, gossiping, or talking about the latest farm machinery, promenade around it. Today, however, the concert platform is deserted. The activity is centered near the post office, grocery store, hardware store, or the bank. We walk in the dusty roads, as there are few sidewalks. The sun glistens from the aluminum store roofs like water. The odor of rotting food drifts from the canning factory. In front of the pool hall the habitual loafers lounge undisturbed by anyone.

The afternoons are long, hot and quiet. Stores are closed to trade; the monotonous plink, plink of the blacksmith's hammer striking the anvil ceases; the gay voices of the children are gone. The air is still; the breeze has vanished. No birds or locusts can be heard. Only vaguely can the tones of a distant radio be heard. The heat has suppressed all life.

The evening brings a return of activity. The newsboys deliver their papers while

being chased by yapping dogs. The delicious smells of cooking spice the air. The chugs of Model T engines denote the return of the farmers. Oblong shadows play across the lawns from which locusts begin their constant hum.

Later, when the sun drops from sight,

cool air replaces the hot. Hand in hand, young couples stroll toward the Square. The roar of automobiles on the highway in the distance is a reminder of an outside world—a changing world. But here, amid peace and tranquility, the outside world seems far away.

Island Magnificent

ED LEWIS

The smooth, turquoise waves of the Pacific come speeding up the even coral runways and fling themselves, as if filled with exhaustion, on the glistening white sands of the beach. Graceful palm trees, pregnant with coconuts, stride down to the water's edge and cast their shadowy silhouettes on the blue glass of the lagoon.

Despite its proximity to the equator, cool breezes as soothing as a mother's hand, caress the island night and day. At two o'clock every afternoon jellyfish come floating up from the ocean floor and for two hours their pink, conical umbrellas fleck the surface of the lagoon. At four o'clock, these medusae return to their subterranean abode as mysteriously as they came.

An airborne observer looking down is

startled by the beauty of the isle's contrasting colors. The vivid green of the foliage, against the virgin white of the sand, makes him think that perhaps Sinbad's Roc dropped a gigantic emerald on this patch of white while flying over. The lagoon, filled with water far bluer than the azure skies overhead, forms a perfect backdrop for this display of tropical grandeur.

This is the atoll of Myrna in the Marshall Islands, a simmering Eden, whose luster defies description, sending out its glory in a profusion of colors. Even the impersonal machines of war, which have laid bare the other isles of this group, have passed it by as if even Mars lacked the audacity to ravish its almost unearthly beauty.